

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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R 120940Z MAR 75

FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 353

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0214

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, ID, PP

SUBJECT: PNG-INDONESIAN RELATIONS

1. JOHN BENNETTS, DEFENCE REPRESENTATIVE IN AUSTRALIAN OFFICE, TOLD ME MARCH 8 THAT THE PNG-IRIAN JAYA BORDER WAS A "SMALL, RUNNING SORE." HE SAID THE GPNG IS CONSIDERABLY CONCERNED ABOUT IT BUT WANT TO PLAY DOWN THEIR CONCERN. HE COMMENTED I WOULD PROBABLY FIND DFRT RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS BORDER PROBLEMS (AND INDEED I HAVE FOUND DFRT RELUCTANT).

2. BENNETTS SAID IN PARTICULAR GPNG (AND GOA) DOES NOT WANT TO AROUSE NEWSPAPER AND RADIO INTEREST. IF THE MEDIA PLAYED UP THE PROBLEM OF IRIAN JAYA AND THE BORDER CROSSINGS INTO PNG, LIBERAL GROUPS AND STUDENT GROUPS IN AUSTRALIA MIGHT JUMP INTO THE FRAY, AND EVEN SEND VOLUNTEERS TO PNG TO HELP THE IRIANESE. A DEVELOPMENT LIKE THIS WOULD CREATE SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR PNG AND, FURTHER, WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR INDONESIAN-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS, HE NOTED.

3. NOW THAT GPNG HAS TAKEN OVER FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PACIFIC ISLAND REGIMENT, IT IS BEGINNING TO THINK ABOUT HOW TO UTILIZE PIR FOR THE GREATEST BENEFIT OF PNG, HE SAID. ONE
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SUGGESTION NOW BEING CONSIDERED IS TO USE PART OF THE PIR IN

DEVELOPMENT WORK ALONG THE IRIAN JAYA BORDER. IF, BENNETTS SAID, THE TROOPS ARE KNOWN TO THE PAPUA NEW GUINEANS ALONG THE BORDER AS THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT ROADS AND BRIDGES, HELPED CLEAR LAND, AND WHO FLEW SICK PEOPLE TO HOSPITALS, THEY WOULD BE CONSIDERED FRIENDS. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE PAPUA NEW GUINEANS IN THE BORDER AREA COULD BE EXPECTED TO INFORM THE PIR IF STRANGERS WERE COMING INTO THE AREA OR IF OTHER NEW DEVELOPMENTS WERE NOTED.

4. COMMENT: BENNETTS, WHO HAS BOTH MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE BACKGROUND, IS PROBABLY WELL INFORMED.
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